

# The View From The

# Ridge



MurrayRidgeCenter  
HELPING PEOPLE...FOR A LIFETIME

## Congratulations Murray Ridge School Class of 2012

On June 1, 2012, eleven Murray Ridge School students said goodbye to their studies and hello to all the future has to offer.



Lorain County Probate Judge James T. Walther, the ceremony's keynote speaker, delivered an inspirational speech, imploring that the eleven gradu-

Murray Ridge School Commencement 2012 began with a prelude by music teacher Nevan Eilbeck and a welcome by Director of Educational Services Dann Swift as he introduced the transferring students, Dustin Bradley, Reynaldo Caraballo, Justin Cirilo, Jeremiah Earp, Warner Ferguson, Krystal Genoff, Indiana Hutson, Jermane Knapp, James McElya, Cody Prezelj, and Logan Reid.

The Murray Ridge Bell Choir played "Morning Has Broken," and then Superintendent Fisher took the podium.

"It is my firm belief that the training and support offered at Murray Ridge School has provided a solid foundation for what's to come," Dr. Fisher said. "Soon it will be time for our graduates to begin to explore vocations and activities that add meaning and quality to their lives, while allowing them to become increasingly independent. Some anxiety during times of change is natural, but such times often also bring extraordinary personal growth."

ates take all they learned throughout their years at Murray Ridge and continue striving for bigger and better things in the future. "You may not always have the confidence to move forward," Judge Walther said. "When you don't have that confidence, rely on your family and friends to get you through it."

He also noted the importance of trying, citing personal examples of trials and tribulations in his own life. To the students, he offered these wise words, "If you don't fail, then you're not really trying."



Judge James T. Walther speaks to the graduates.

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Director of Vocational and Transportation Services Jeff Miller added his own encouraging words to each senior, quoting the Dr. Seuss book *Oh The Places You'll Go!* "You're off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, so get on your way!"

Following the keynote address, Board President Michelle Hunt and Board Member Dan White presented each graduate with a diploma. Finally, the tenth annual David Elasser Spirit Award was presented to Warner Ferguson by Kathy Oblak, mother of David Elsasser, a previous student at Murray Ridge School who passed away eleven years ago.

The ceremony ended with Dann Swift wishing the seniors best of luck in the future, and thanking them for their hard work and dedication as students at Murray Ridge School.

The festive afternoon concluded with a luncheon for all graduates, their families and friends, and staff members provided by the Parent Support Group.

Best of luck to our 2012 graduates, Dustin Bradley, Reynaldo Caraballo, Justin Cirilo, Jeremiah Earp, War-

ner Ferguson, Krystal Genoff, Indiana Hutson, Jermaine Knapp, James McElya, Cody Prezelj, and Logan Reid.



Indiana Hutson receives her graduation corsage, while new graduate Cody Prezelj enjoys his post-graduation lunch.

## Global Company and MRC Customer Visits the EOVC

On Tuesday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, executives from Foseco Metals visited the Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center for a tour and to meet with some of the consumers who work directly on their products.

Foseco, which is the EOVC's largest customer, has been associated with the metallurgical industry for more than 50 years and has operations in more than 30 countries. On a quality audit conducted in June at the EOVC, staff from Foseco remarked how impressed they were with Murray Ridge consumers and their ability to handle the company's large and detailed projects, calling the EOVC "the most organized of any facility we've been in worldwide."

After the quality audit, through which the EOVC received a rating of B+ (and were told that an "A" rating is impossible), the CEO and other top executives asked to come back and see all that EOVC and Murray Ridge has to offer its customers.

In comparing Murray Ridge to other companies used by Foseco, it was noted that Murray Ridge is doing what manufacturing companies have been trying to set up at their facilities for years....and accomplishing it with a diverse workforce.



Cindy Janosko, Mark Kaminski (MRC staff), Kirk Garrett, and Billy Patterson from Foseco tour the EOVC.

Congratulations to the consumers and staff of the EOVC for continuing an important partnership with one of our largest customers, and for impressing the visitors as they marveled at all we accomplish every day at Murray Ridge Center.

# Summer Internship Shapes Career of Kent State Graduate

Like many of the people who visit the Murray Ridge Opportunity/Vocational Centers, Brianna Vargo can't say enough good things about the consumers who attend our Adult Services programs. However, Brianna isn't simply a visitor; she is a college intern who dedicated her summer to helping at the Oberlin Opportunity/Vocational Center (OOVC) as a way to gain real-life working experience. What she ended up gaining was a new perspective on what Murray Ridge does for the community and a whole new career direction for her future.

Brianna, 21, a 2009 Midview graduate who grew up in Grafton, learned about Murray Ridge Center through her mother, who works as an Intervention Specialist at JVS. After discovering all MRC had to offer, Brianna contacted Steve Harder, Director of the OOVC, and inquired about a possible internship. Steve agreed, but warned Brianna that her work at the OVC would be different from her established career goals.

When she first started college, Brianna had her sights set on a different career. "At first, I wanted to do things with the elderly population," Brianna said, which is the reason she will be receiving her Gerontology degree from Kent State in August.

But working at MRC has changed her perspective on where she sees herself after completing her Masters Degree in Arts and Human Development and Family Studies, which she begins working on this fall. "After I began this internship at Murray Ridge, I became more interested in working with lifespan development, and I particularly enjoy working with the developmentally disabled population."

Her interest and desire to make this change didn't happen immediately. When she began her internship in May, Brianna had doubts, and wondered if she had the right skills to work in the OVC. "I was so afraid that I wouldn't know how to interact with this population, whom I've never worked with before. I wondered if I'd know how to understand their behaviors or how to handle myself in difficult situations."

However, within her first week, that perception changed, and Brianna discovered that her doubts were unfounded. "You see how amazing these people truly are. You can see their unique talents and abilities." Brianna was also impressed with the Murray Ridge staff. "Everybody loves working here – their love for the consumers and love for their jobs are what makes it a fun and exciting place to work."

Unfortunately for the consumers and staff at the OOVC, Brianna ended her internship on July 26, but can envision a return to the Murray Ridge family. "I love what the agency does," Brianna commented about MRC. "It's so geared towards helping the consumer – not giving them boundaries, but helping them set and reach goals each and every day."

And that is the mission of Murray Ridge Center. Helping people address and overcome barriers that they face because of developmental disabilities. Helping eligible individuals earn an income in safe and stimulating environments, where they have opportunities for personal growth and socialization. Helping young students learn and thrive at our school. And, continually working towards our goal of *Helping people...for a lifetime.*



Brianna (right) reads with Andrea Frcka, a consumer at the Oberlin Opportunity/Vocational Center.

## Consumer Spotlight: Jennifer Jones Oberlin Opportunity/Vocational Center

"Murray Ridge Center has helped me become a more independent, kindhearted, and caring person who is more confident in herself."

These words were spoken by Jennifer Jones, a 25 year old woman who attends Murray Ridge Center's Oberlin Opportunity/Vocational Center (OOVC). Her touching words highlight the crucial role played by Murray Ridge Center's adult day programs in ensuring that adults with developmental disabilities have ongoing opportunities for engaging activities, skills development, socialization, and participation in the work force.

The OVCs, which are located in Lorain, Elyria, and Oberlin, are places where adults with developmental disabilities, like Jennifer, can interact with others, work and receive a paycheck, and pursue their goals and interests in a safe and friendly environment. While some individuals come to Murray Ridge's Adult Programs from Murray Ridge School, still more come to Murray Ridge from their neighborhood schools.

High school was academically challenging for Jennifer, and she often had feelings of isolation due to her disability.

But happily, she graduated from Wellington High School in 2007, which she describes as the proudest thing she's ever done. "I walked across the stage and knew I could do anything," she said with a smile.

However, starting at the Murray Ridge OOVC changed Jennifer's life in ways she could never have imagined.

When she first started at Murray Ridge, Jennifer was scared to make friends and experience life. Through the love and support of consumers and staff, she was able to overcome her anxiety. Although she's experienced much heartbreak, including the loss of a family member and the recent deaths of her therapy dogs, Jennifer was able to lean on Murray Ridge and find the support she needed. She transitioned from a young woman with little self-confidence and very few friends to an adult who has become an independent, confident, and caring friend to countless peers and co-workers at the OOVC.

Her many job responsibilities, including seal and graphics work, and working in the OVC kitchen, have allowed her to develop skills she never knew she had.

And, as a Level 1 Waiver recipient, Jennifer has the ability to get out after hours, and participate actively in her community.

"If I didn't have Murray Ridge, I'd probably be sitting at home doing absolutely nothing," she said. "Murray Ridge Center has made me more confident in myself. They made me care. I really appreciate everything they have done for me. The Murray Ridge staff has supported me through everything, ups and downs, and they treat me like family."

That is how many of the individuals who participate in Murray Ridge Center's many services see it – as a family, with compassion and care the core focus of the community. Where the motto, Helping People...For a Lifetime, is truly just that; a lifetime of help for those who need it the most, and support for their families and caregivers.

From Jennifer Jones' perspective, this is the essential value Murray Ridge Center brings to the community, the developmentally disabled population, and to those who have nowhere else to turn. "I am very blessed to have Murray Ridge's support, because there are a lot of people out there who need it...even more than I do."



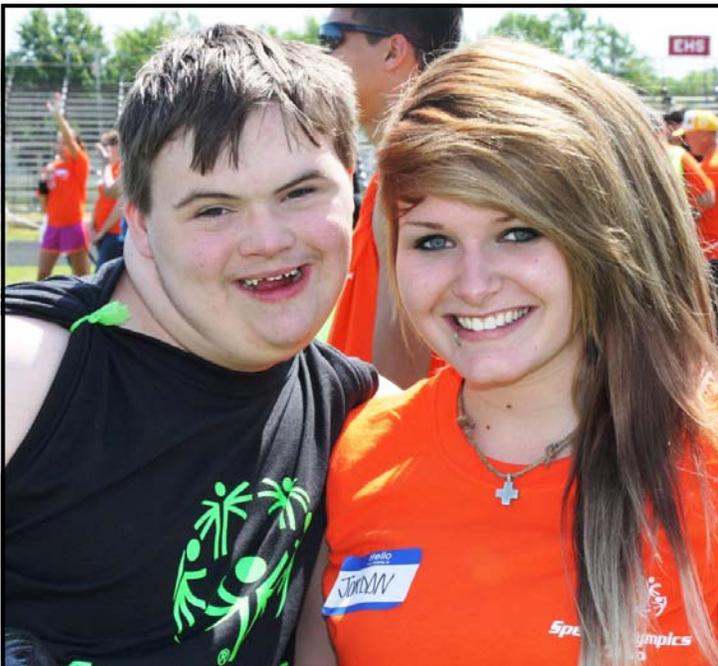
Jennifer smiles with her Level 1 Waiver provider Tina Tucker.

# Murray Ridge School Students Shine at 32nd Annual Lorain County Special Olympics

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, Murray Ridge School students participated in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Lorain County Special Olympics competition at Ely Stadium in Elyria.

More than thirty Murray Ridge athletes participated in a wide range of activities, including sprint races, soft-ball throw, long jump, relay races, and the opening ceremony, where they marched in a parade around the stadium's track. Twelve school districts throughout Lorain County competed in the games, and hundreds of parents, caregivers, teachers, friends, and families came out to show their support.

Murray Ridge is a proud participant each year in this event where children with developmental disabilities can showcase their exceptional athletic ability. We commend all the athletes that competed in the games, and special congratulations to our Murray Ridge School students who brought home multiple medals and countless good times.



Pictured (top-bottom, l-r): Jimmy Woods, Warner Ferguson, and Grant Holbrook hold the banner to lead the parade. Joe Cechura proudly displays two ribbons. Obed Robledo and classroom aid, Amy Daniels, run a race. Tyler Rudolchick and his stepsister (and volunteer!) Tracy smile after his softball throw, and Stephanie Jackson works her way down the track in her first event.

Lorain County Board of  
Developmental Disabilities

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